

Good morning. I am here to testify in opposition to SB 280. This legislature, particularly Republicans, talks a lot about the importance of local control. Senate Bill 280 undermines local control by interfering with the relationship between a local school district and its employees.

I work as a teacher in Livonia Public Schools, and in Livonia, we have had a released time teacher association president since before I started working there, at least since the late 1990s. The arrangement for released time was first suggested by the school district as a half time position, and then as a full time position. Although I do not have the released time position, I can testify to how valuable it is for the district and for the association.

If the released time position were eliminated, much of the district's business with its teacher representatives would have to be carried out outside of school hours, or by getting a substitute teacher for the union representatives. Both of these options would be detrimental to school district efficiency. If outside of school hours, that would create a log jam of decisions not made and actions that would have to be delayed. As you know, the input of the association is required by law in many situations, and if meetings pile up and cannot be held, the school district's operations will be hampered.

If instead, the school district chooses to provide a substitute teacher for the association teacher, this would disrupt the continuity of instruction, often on very short notice. In a large school district like Livonia, this could happen several times in a week. Certainly students would have more difficulty getting help from the teacher after school when it was needed. This would be detrimental for the students, the parents, and the rest of the school staff.

Whatever cost estimates you are using to justify this bill are certainly flawed, because if release time is prohibited and the association president returns to the classroom full time, it will be a teacher on the lower end of the salary scale that will be laid off, or if no one is laid off as a result, there will be no cost savings and only increased substitute costs. This bill is short sighted and limits how school districts can choose to operate.

When a superintendent or human resources director of a school district spends time in his or her day conferring with their union representatives, you are not questioning that expense. If a school district chooses to use its resources to provide released time for its association representative, let them do so. Trust the people on the front line to understand what is effective in managing the day-to-day operations of the school district. Leave the decision to the local districts – support local control.

Senate Bill 280 does nothing except undermine the operations of school districts, particularly large ones with a large number of employees. Please vote no on this bill. Thank you.

Douglas Coates